

## **Summary of the Proficiency Testing Committee Teleconference November 21, 1996**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Thursday, November 21, 1996. The meeting was led by PT Committee Chair Ms. Andrea M. Jirka of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region 7, Environmental Services Division. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. An agenda for the teleconference is given in Attachment C.

### **INTRODUCTION**

*The principle purpose of the meeting was to review both the marked-up version of Chapter 2 and the Proficiency Testing Study Evaluation Criteria. Specific topics of discussion were as follows:*

- ! Chapter Mark-up -- Review notations in copy of Chapter 2 as provided to Committee members for accuracy and completeness, and
- ! PT Study Evaluation Criteria -- Review basics of criteria as drafted by Ms Anne Rhyne and e-mailed to Committee members.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

The minutes of the November 7, 1996, teleconference, were reviewed, discussed, and approved as written.

### **MEETING IN PHOENIX, AZ**

The Committee meeting to be held in Phoenix, AZ, was discussed briefly. It was noted that the meeting will be casual in terms of attire. Goals for the meeting include reviewing the following:

- ! The goals and overview of the PT program as presented in Section 2.0;
- ! Appendices A and B, and perhaps Appendix C; and
- ! Recent revisions to Chapter 2.

### **REVIEW OF CHAPTER 2 MARK-UP**

Ms. Jirka faxed all members of the Committee copies of Chapter 2 that included notations of changes, additions, and deletions to be made to the chapter. She requested comments on the accuracy and completeness of the notations.

Mr. Fred Grunder suggested that the term *minimum* be introduced into the rule about laboratory participation presented in Section 2.2, line 5, so that it read "Each laboratory shall participate in a

*minimum of two PT studies per year.”* The change would cover laboratories participating in retesting.

Others noted that the language on retesting as found at the end of Section 2.4.2 describes full-fledged testing.

## **REVIEW OF PT STUDY EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **Section I, General Assumptions**

\* Item 1-- A question was raised about the number of failed analytes within a field of testing that would result in a failed field of testing. Mr. Grunder noted that the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) bases the pass/fail criteria in its PT programs on overall performance for each field of testing in question. This discussion led to the topic of defining the field of testing. It was proposed that each laboratory be allowed to define its own field of testing, especially in the selection of analytes, and also that the pass/fail criteria be applied to the individual components of a field of testing. There was general agreement on this proposal.

### **Section II, Initial Qualification**

It was noted that initial qualification requires passing two consecutive studies while continuing qualification requires passing two out of three consecutive studies. This makes initial qualification more stringent than ongoing qualification. All teleconference participants found this difference acceptable.

### **Section III, Requirements to Maintain Accreditation**

It was proposed that the last item, “Cannot have two consecutive failures”, be eliminated, since this matter is covered in the first item, “Must pass at least 2 out of the most recent 3.” This change was accepted by all teleconference attendees.

### **Section IV, Remedial Samples and Corrective Action**

\* Item 1 -- It was noted that “replacement samples” should be differentiated from “remedial samples.”

\* Item 2 -- Concern was expressed whether the 30 day limit was sufficient to prevent different remedial samples from being run together. Since remedial samples cannot be provided until an initial or another remedial sample result has been reported, this is not a problem.

\* Item 3 -- Mr. Tom Coyner stated that corrective action should be required, not optional, after one failure. After some discussion, it was agreed that the section be reworded to specify that laboratories are required to investigate and correct any sources of failure and that these actions must be documented. Ms. Jirka will compose and add appropriate wording. Mr. Ted Coopwood noted that analysis of a remedial sample serves as a test of the effectiveness of any corrective action.

### **Section V, Criteria for Revocation of Accreditation**

Ms. Jirka proposed that language be added to this section noting that criteria for revocation are ultimately decided by the States.

## **Section VI, Accrediting Authorities (States) Responsibilities in Revocation of Accreditation**

\* Item 1 -- It was noted that the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) cannot require States to take a particular course of action. Mr. Coopwood noted that NELAP can require action, but only the States have the authority to define what that action is. It was suggested that interpretation of "requirements" be left to the legal authorities. Mr. Coopwood will investigate this matter and report back to the Committee.

It was noted that there are two primary issues in this section:

- ! The limits of NELAP in setting requirements for the States, and
- ! The significant differences in the regulations of the different States and how these differences may impact reciprocity.

It was suggested that it is preferable not to make any required action too limiting. Another suggestion was to omit any requirements. There was general concern that the program will come down to the least common denominator; that is, States will only accept NELAP requirements if they are minimal and have no significant impact on already established State programs. It was noted that States may need to change their regulations/programs in order to participate in NELAP. It was generally agreed that this item should remain as written.

\* Item 2 -- The Committee found the list acceptable, but it noted that the wording needs to be improved.

## **Section VII, Reapplication for Accreditation**

All the teleconference participants found this section acceptable as written.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled from 3 to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on Thursday, December 5, 1996. The PT Committee will discuss the materials to be included in Appendices A and B, which are to be provided by the respective subcommittees.

Ms. Jirka and Mr. Chuck Wibby will revise the current draft of Chapter 2 to reflect recent decisions about its content. These revisions will be completed before the meeting in Phoenix so that the Committee members will have an opportunity to review it prior to this face-to-face meeting.

A draft of Chapter 2 is due to Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC Director, by Friday, December 20, 1996.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**Proficiency Testing Committee**  
**November 21, 1996**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
The outline of Section 2.4.2 reviewed during the course of this teleconference will be written to conform to the Chapter 2 format.  <b>Mr. Coopwood</b> will pass a copy of this section to the Process Committee after an acceptable draft has been completed.	
Individuals and groups will continue to write appendices as assigned for discussion on December 11, 1996.	
<b>Ms. Jirka</b> and <b>Mr. Wibby</b> will work together to complete a revised draft of Chapter 2 for discussion at the meeting in Phoenix, AZ.	
<b>Mr. Coopwood</b> will investigate the “requirements” related to revocation, by NELAC as well as the States.	

**LIST OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS/TELECONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**  
**Proficiency Testing Committee Teleconference**  
**November 21, 1996**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Communication Numbers</b>
Andrea M. Jirka, Chair	USEPA Region 7, Environmental Services Division	T: 913-551-5091 F: 913-551-5218 E: jirka.andrea@epamail.epa.gov
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Tom V. Coyner	Analytical Products Group, Inc.	T: 614-423-4200 F: 614-423-5588 E: apg@citynet.net
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Fred I. Grunder	American Industrial Hygiene Assoc.	T: 703-849-8888 F: 703-207-3561 E: fgrunder@aiha.org
Wynn Nimmo (Invited)	AZ Department of Health	T: 601/255-3454 F: 602/255-3462 E:
Faust R. Parker (absent)	EH&A Laboratories, Biomonitoring	T: 713-977-1500 F: 713-977-9233 E: none
Anne Rhyne (absent)	TX Natural Resource Conservation Commission	T: 512-239-1291 F: 512-239-2550 E: arhyne@smtpgate.tnrc.state.tx.us
Jerry Thoma (absent)	Environmental Health Labs	T: 219-233-4777 F: 219-233-8207 E: thoma@mas-tech.iag.net
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**PT Conference Call Agenda  
Thursday, November 21; 3 -5 EST  
(2 CST; 1 MST; 12 PST)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

- Review minutes (Will be sent separately by RTI)

**DISCUSSION ITEMS FOR PHOENIX MEETING**

- Goals and overview for Section 2.1
- Appendices A, B, maybe C
- Recent revisions to the rest of the Chapter

**MARK-UP TO CURRENT CHAPTER (FAXED SEPARATELY)**

- Did I cover the concepts accurately?

**REVISIONS TO 2.4.2, CRITERIA FOR LABS (WILL BE SENT SEPARATELY BY ANNE)**

NOTE: These are in bullet format for today's discussion. We will rewrite them to fit the Chapter format once the committee is satisfied with the concepts.

**ACTION ITEMS**

- Should we try to redraft the Chapter (main body) before the Phoenix meeting?
- NOTE: We need to have the draft Chapter to Jeanne Mourrain by Dec. 20, along with any appendices that are ready for NELAC review.